



India appoints its next ambassador to China

The latest appointment underscores the great importance New Delhi attaches to its ties with Beijing, and a strong emphasis on pragmatism in advancing ties **3**

86% of Canadian firms prioritize China: survey

Canadian companies are increasingly elevating China as a priority market and expressing stronger confidence in their business prospects amid external uncertainties **10**

Major infrastructure projects propel investment growth

Nationwide efforts are currently accelerating major projects, strengthening policy support, and boosting market vitality. Check out the infographic for more details. **13**



Foreign ministers from Arab and Muslim countries convene for urgent discussions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 19, 2026, as conflict in the Middle East spilled over to energy facilities. Photo: VCG

► Conflict enters 'new stage' with spillovers on key energy facilities

China says killing of Iranian leaders unacceptable

By Shen Sheng and Li Yu

China on Thursday said it is "shocked" by the remarks by Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz, who said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and he have authorized the Israel Defense Forces to kill any Iranian official without the need for additional authorization.

Katz's remarks came as US-

Israel strikes killed three high-ranking Iranian officials in the past three days, including Iranian Secretary of Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani, commander of the internal Basij militia Gholamreza Soleimani and Iranian intelligence minister Esmael Khatib.

"The killing of Iranian leaders and attacks on civilian targets are by no means accept-

able," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian, adding that China is always against the use of force in international relations.

As the war entered its 20th day on Thursday, the conflict has rapidly evolved from strikes on military targets to a full-scale exchange of attacks on energy infrastructure. The conflict has also spilled over to energy

facilities in neighboring Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, sending shockwaves through global energy markets.

'New stage'

Escalating attacks on Persian Gulf oil-and-gas infrastructure are sending the US-Israeli war with Iran into a dangerous new phase that threat-

Takaichi arrives in US at 'awkward' moment amid Iran war

By Zhao Yusha and Zhang Yuying

When US President Donald Trump visited Japan in October 2025, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi greeted him with a charm offensive. Through "praise, Nobel nominations and promises of investment in the US," Takaichi secured a pledge from the US president: "Anything I can do to help Japan, we will be there." Now that it is Takaichi's turn to visit Washington, the atmosphere is markedly different, largely because of the war in Iran, and it's the US that's asking for help.

Takaichi arrived on Wednesday in Washington DC, hoping to secure American cooperation on trade, security and a tougher approach toward China. However, Reuters headlined its coverage of Takaichi's US trip with "Japan's leader faces high-wire act in Washington over Trump's Iran demands," as her agenda risks being overshadowed by Trump's own priorities, particularly his focus on pressing Japan to assist in reopening the Strait of Hormuz – an issue on which Tokyo has been reluctant to commit.

Chinese experts noted that Takaichi's trip is unlikely to meet the expectations, highlighting the constraints and awkwardness of her diplomatic position.

In order to showcase her goodwill, Takaichi is said to gift 250 Japanese cherry trees to mark US' 250th birthday. However, she will be greeted by a wartime president who's looking for a different kind of gift from her country: mili-

▶ Standing eggs



Two children at the Third Municipal Kindergarten in Xinle, Shijiazhuang, North China's Hebei Province, show their hand-painted colored eggs featuring the Chinese words "Spring Equinox Egg Standing" on March 19, 2026. Standing eggs is part of the traditional celebrations of Spring Equinox, which falls on March 20 this year.

Photo: VCG

Experts warn conflict marked by unpredictable attrition

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ens to worsen the crisis over global energy supplies, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Israel on Wednesday struck Iran's South Pars gas field, the world's largest and the crown jewel of Iran's energy industry. Hours later, Iran launched missiles against oil and gas facilities across Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, hitting Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City and setting off fires there, Al Jazeera reported Thursday.

The South Pars gas field, shared between Iran and Qatar (where the Qatari side is known as North Dome), contains an estimated 1,800 trillion cubic feet of usable gas – enough to supply the entire world's needs for 13 years, according to Reuters.

After intercepting missiles fired from Iran, the UAE shut down its Habshan gas facility, according to the Arab Weekly. For its part, Saudi Arabia stated that on Wednesday it intercepted and destroyed four ballistic missiles launched toward Riyadh, in addition to foiling an attempted drone attack on a gas facility in its east.

According to Al Jazeera, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud warned Iran at a news conference on Thursday that tolerance of its attacks on his country and those of neighboring Gulf states is limited, calling on Tehran to immediately "recalculate" its strategy.

Prince Faisal's warning followed a meeting of foreign ministers from Arab and Islamic countries in the Saudi capital earlier in the day to discuss the expanding war in the region.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, told the Global Times on Thursday that the current conflict has entered a highly dangerous stage and is even undergoing a qualitative shift.

"While concerns previously focused on the security of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the situation now threatens not only transportation but also production. Strikes on gas fields and oil production facilities could put both energy production and transportation at risk simultaneously, with potentially immeasurable consequences for the global economy," Liu added.

Notably, regarding Israel's latest strike on the South Pars gas field, Trump wrote on Truth Social that the "US knew nothing about this particular attack," while declaring that Israel would not carry out any further attacks on the "extremely important and valuable" South Pars gas field unless Iran "unwisely decides to attack a very innocent, in this case, Qatar."

However, the Wall Street Journal and Axios reported that Trump knew of Israel's plan to attack the South Pars in advance and supported it.

Targeting Iranian leaders may bring limited tactical gains but are unlikely to change the course of the war or achieve strategic goals. Repeated attacks on senior leaders could instead trigger stronger retaliation, while Iran's relatively stable political and security system, with institutionalized succession mechanisms, makes it difficult to weaken its decision-making capacity. Zhu Yongbiao, director of the Center for Afghanistan

Studies at Lanzhou University, told the Global Times.

Close communication with China

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday held a phone conversation with British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper upon the latter's request, exchanging views on the Middle East situation, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Wang Yi said that there are no winners in the prolonged wars, and a ceasefire and end to hostilities are the will of the people. China urges all parties to immediately cease military actions and resolve differences through equal dialogues. Adding that as permanent members of the UN Security Council, China and the UK bear the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, according to Xinhua.

Meanwhile, the ongoing conflict has heightened nuclear safety concerns, with WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Director Hanan Balkhy stating that UN staff are closely monitoring the fallout from US-Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities and maintaining high vigilance for any nuclear threat. She warned that the worst-case scenario – a nuclear incident – would cause lasting harm to the region and potentially the world, with consequences persisting for decades, Politico.eu reported.

Chinese experts noted that the overlap of risks related to energy, economic security and nuclear safety highlights how the conflict has moved beyond its initial so-called "punitive" objectives and entered a stage marked by unpredictable attrition and escalating spillover risks.

Trip unlikely to meet expectations under constraints, US-Japan divergence: expert

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tary assistance in the Middle East, according to Washington Post.

Takaichi reportedly claimed on Wednesday before leaving that if Trump were to request the deployment of Japan's Self-Defense Forces to the strait, she would "clearly explain, in accordance with Japanese law, what can and cannot be done." She also stated that Japan has been working to ease tensions by leveraging its friendly relations with Iran, adding that "we will firmly convey this position of Japan as well," Jiji reported.

She also admitted on Wednesday that she expects a "very difficult" meeting with Trump, the Associated Press reported.

Japan's Nippon Television cited a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official as saying that "frankly, we don't know what kind of demands President Trump might suddenly come out with," underscoring a sense of caution.

If Trump is displeased, Japan could face unfavorable demands on tariffs or security issues, Japan's Hokkaido Shimbun reported.

Takaichi's visit to Washington has unfolded awkwardly on multiple fronts, Lü Chao, an expert at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times.

Lü noted that Takaichi's provocative stance against China was intended to signal alignment with Washington. However, recent signals from Trump about engaging Beijing on broader international issues stand in contrast to Japan's more confrontational posture, potentially weakening Japan's anticipation, Lü noted.

Unpopular figure

Japan's Sankei news reported that leaders from Japan and the US will confirm their policy of jointly promoting a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." The Japanese prime minister also intends to stress the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits.

Takaichi plans to reassure Trump of Japan's military buildup, emphasizing the acceleration of long-range missile deployment to enhance offensive capabilities. This breaks from Japan's post-war self-defense-only principle and reflects closer alignment with the US, per AP.

Japan's Kyodo News reported ahead of the visit on Tuesday that Takaichi is also considering expressing Japan's desire to cooperate on the US "Golden Dome" next-generation missile defense system at her upcoming meeting with Trump, citing Japanese government sources.

Sending a clear warning to Japan, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said at a regular briefing on Wednesday that Japan has been consistently undertaking steps toward remilitarization, including the procurement of strike weapons such as cruise missiles, which cannot be classified as defensive weapons. Zakharova said if new missile threats to Russian territory emerge, Russia will respond and take necessary measures to ensure its defense capability, Xinhua reported.

Commenting on Takaichi's US visit, former Japanese prime minister Yukio Hatoyama said he views the current prime minister as having "a strong inclination toward subordination to the US," according to The Tokyo Shimbun.

"The Japan-US security treaty, which is meant to preserve peace, must not become something that leads Japan into war," he said.

